5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

across a recently sown field of early millet already a few inches high. I chanced to tread on a shoot. Immediately one of the small boys stooped and carefully raised and replanted the blade of millet. 'Why did you do that?' I asked. 'Don't you know that is our food?' he replied reproachfully.

2. Every small boy of 6–7 years and upwards has a passionate desire to own a hen, and many of them are able to realize this ambition. If you ask a small boy why he wants a hen he will reply in almost the same words as an adult uses to explain the importance of 'things' (*bon*). 'If you have a hen it lays eggs, and you take the eggs and breed chicks, then you can sell the chickens and buy a goat, and when the goat breeds you can sell its offspring and buy a sheep, and when the sheep breeds you can sell its offspring and buy a cow, and then you can take the cow and get a wife.'

3. Maanyeya, a little girl of about 9–10 years, said that she had eaten none of the meat of last night's sacrifice. 'Why?' I asked. 'When they sacrifice to Zukɔk', she explained gravely, 'women don't eat of the meat. If they do, they will never bear any children, they become sterile.' 'What's that to you?' I said. 'Am I not a woman? Who wants to be sterile?' she responded almost indignantly.

4. I was playing with Tarɔmba and Yindubil (8–9 years), sons of the same joint family, and their friends. We were discussing parents. Tarɔmba and Yindubil, speaking together, told me the story of the latter's mother. Three or four years ago she had run away from their father to marry another man. They said, in the very words that an adult member of the family would use, speaking seriously: 'She ran away and took our belly [that is, she was pregnant by their father] and went and bore over there, so our child is there. Then she bore another child there. When our child is big enough we will separate it [*pokg*—the technical legal term] and bring it home.' These two were thus identifying themselves completely with the family, mother–child attachments notwithstanding.

Such examples could be multiplied tenfold, but they will suffice at this stage.

The adult attitude about education. Education is not an entirely unwitting process among the Tallensi. They set a high, and indeed overdetermined, value on their culture, and are fully aware of the fact that

5: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937)1938 FE11 Tallensi FE11

its continuity depends upon adequate transmission to their descendants. Their social structure, which is built up on the lineage system, and their economic organization put a premium on this, and a significant motive for stressing the continuity of their culture arises from their ancestor cult. Every Talǝŋa desires sons so that there may be some one left to pour libations and make sacrifices to him after his death. The ancestor cult and family morality combine to imbue every man and woman with an intense sense of their continuity, both physical and psychological, with their parents on the one hand and their children on the other. A man feels a moral compulsion to pass on his private possessions, his craft, tools, and knowledge to his son, a woman to her daughter. He has the same feeling about carrying on a craft or cult which had been practised by a parent. Ironwork is not merely a profitable craft to the blacksmiths of Sakpee; it is a religious duty to their ancestors.

The most conspicuous affective moment in the religious system of the Tallensi is this sense of moral obligation to parents and children. It is the counterpart of the notion that the sins of the fathers will be visited on the offspring even unto the third and fourth generation. Last year, for instance, Kuwaas had to promise heavy sacrifices to expiate the sin of his grandfather, who was responsible, three generations ago, for the ravaging of his clan settlement by the Hill Talis.

The idea of education is, therefore, not only understood but also frequently formulated in discussions and conversations. A chief once observed to me that children learn who their fathers and ancestors (*banam ni yaanam*) were by listening at sacrifices. 'Our ancestor shrines are our books', he said. Nyaaŋzum, a man of 45–50, put these conceptions neatly and precisely one day when we were discussing some particularly secret ritual matters. His 'grandson',[1] a youth of about 25, was with us. 'Shall we send him away?' I asked. 'No,' he replied, 'if he listens it doesn't matter. He will not gossip to any one. And when some day I am no longer here, is it not he who will take it on? If he listens will he not know, will he not acquire wisdom?' When children are very small, he explained, they know nothing about religious things. 'They learn little by little. When we go to the

[1] Kinship terms placed between inverted commas are translations of native terms indicating classificatory kin.